



May 2004

Academic Program Plans at Public Baccalaureate Institutions

OVERVIEW

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) employs a three-step process to fulfill its responsibility to oversee academic program planning, review and approval at the state's six public four-year college and universities. The first step in that process for the 2005-07 biennium was the institutions' submission in January of their two-year program plans. The program plans provide an overall picture of the types of programs the institutions are planning to offer over the next couple of years.

Typically, the HECB approves, rejects or requests further work on the institutional program plans within two or three months after they are submitted, following a review by public and private colleges and state higher education agencies.

This year, however, the Legislature and Governor enacted legislation (HB 3103) to revise and update the HECB's statutory responsibilities, including the Board's role in assessing the need for new academic programs. The new law directs the Board to conduct a far-ranging and collaborative "needs assessment" for academic planning that is very likely to result in changes to the current planning, review and approval process.

Within that context, the HECB staff recommends the Board defer action on the program plans that are summarized below until it has revised its process in accordance with the terms of HB 3103.

BACKGROUND: NEW DEGREE PROGRAM PLANNING AND APPROVAL

The Higher Education Coordinating Board's *Guidelines for Program Planning, Approval, and Review* require new degree programs at the public four-year institutions to undergo a three-stage review process:

I. Program Plan: At the early stage of program planning, each institution's program plan includes basic information on program location, need, enrollments, funding, and delivery. These plans are submitted for Board action every two years in January. They are also reviewed by the public and private institutions, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

As part of this process, the HECB staff evaluate the need for the program based on information from the institution and/or other sources, and recommend specific actions by the Board.

At this stage, the Board takes one of the following actions:

1. **Grants permission** for the institution to develop a program proposal for Board consideration;
2. **Returns** the program to the university for further development; or
3. **Disapproves** the development of the proposed program.

Changes to the program plan are made every two years. In extraordinary cases, the HECB Executive Director may grant exceptions to the program planning process. This helps the Board assess how well state needs are being addressed. It also provides opportunities for institutions to develop collaborative and complementary programs.

II. Program Approval: This part of the process focuses on a detailed evaluation of specific proposals for new degree programs. It addresses such issues as the need for the program, the cost-effective use of resources, the quality of the proposed program, outcome assessment and diversity. Proposals to create new degree programs are submitted for Board review at least three months prior to the program's start date. The Board usually approves the program or grants conditional approval. In rare cases, the Board will reject the establishment of the program.

Review of program proposals by experts in relevant academic fields, other Washington colleges, and the HECB staff often leads to enhancements in both the proposal and program itself. The process is designed to ensure that new programs are responsive to specific priorities of the state and the HECB.

III. Program Review: In the third stage of the process, the Board reviews reports (submitted every to years in January) on enrollments in recently established programs, and more in-depth reviews of existing programs conducted every five to 10 years by the universities.

Program review information increases the Board's understanding of the degree programs offered in the state and influences policies and recommendations on institutional budget proposals. Program review also helps identify struggling or duplicative programs that may require further study and action by the institution and the Board.

SUMMARY OF 2005-2007 INSTITUTIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAM PLANS

In accordance with this three-stage process, five of the six public four-year institutions have submitted their institutional academic program plans for 2005- 2007. (The Evergreen State College did not propose any new degree programs and therefore did not submit a plan. During this cycle, the institutions propose to initiate 25 new degree programs at their respective campuses, off-campus sites, or via distance education technology. Table 1 displays the proposed new degree programs for each institution.

Table 1: 2005-2007 Institutional Academic Program Plans

Institution	Program	Location
CWU	BAS Food Service Management	SeaTac, Lynnwood
	BS Geography	Ellensburg
	BAS Industrial Technology	SeaTac, Lynnwood
	MA Visual Arts: Teaching	Ellensburg
	MEd Education & Linguistic Diversity	Ellensburg
EWU	BA Women's Studies	Cheney
TESC	No New Programs Planned for 2005-2007	
UW	BA Geographic Information Systems & Cartography	Tacoma
	BA Responsive Citizenship	Seattle
	BA Urban & Regional Planning	Tacoma
	BS Embedded Computer Engineering Systems	Tacoma
	M Rehabilitation Counseling	Seattle
	M Teaching	Tacoma
	MA Cultural Studies	Bothell
	MS Computational Molecular Biology	Seattle
	MS Embedded Computer Engineering Systems	Tacoma
	MS Medical Education & Informatics	Seattle
	D Library & Information Management	Seattle
	PhD Computational Molecular Biology	Seattle
	PhD Public Policy & Management	Seattle
WSU	BA Linguistics	Pullman
	PhD Health Policy & Administration	Pullman, Spokane
	PhD Nursing	Spokane, Distance Education
WWU	MEd Advanced Classroom Practice	Bellingham
	MEd Continuing & College Education	Bellingham & Everett
	MS Marine & Estuarine Science	Bellingham

HB 3103 PROGRAM PLANNING AND APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

HB 3103, which will take effect June 10, 2004, addresses academic program planning by directing the HECB to:

- Develop an ongoing, comprehensive process to analyze the need for additional degrees and programs, additional off-campus centers and locations for degree programs, and consolidation or elimination of programs offered by the public four-year institutions;
- Develop clear program approval guidelines and objective decision-making criteria, including review and consultation with the institutions and other interested parties; and
- Assess every two years the number and type of higher education job training credentials required to respond to employer demand for a skilled and educated work force.

Institutions must demonstrate that their proposed new programs respond to the Board's needs assessment and that the proposed programs are aligned with or implement the HECB Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education.

RECOMMENDATION: DEFERRAL OF ACTION ON 2005-07 PROGRAM PLANS

The HECB staff recommends the Board defer action on 2005-07 program plans until it has updated and revised its program review and approval guidelines in accordance with HB 3103.

By deferring action at the May meeting, the Board will allow itself (and the public and private colleges and universities) an opportunity to develop the far-reaching needs assessment and evaluation process called for by the Legislature and Governor in the new legislation. Once that framework is in place, the Board will be able to analyze institutional program plans in the long-term analytical context envisioned by legislators and the Governor. In addition, the Board will have completed its 2004 strategic master plan, which will provide further direction to state and institutional planning efforts.

Such a deferral will not preclude the review and consideration of new degree programs that are submitted to the Board while the work required by HB 3103 takes place. Nor will it preclude consideration of new degree programs that received the Board's permission to proceed with the development of a full proposal during previous program planning cycles.

Finally, such a deferral should not preclude continuing the academic program planning conducted by the Council of Presidents' Inter-institutional Committee for Academic Program Planning (ICAPP), which engages in planning among the institutions to meet state educational needs or the specific requirements of underserved populations. The committee shares information about new programs widely – with the HECB and other organizations – to avoid program duplication and to increase coordination and cooperation in the delivery of higher education across the state.



STATE OF WASHINGTON
HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

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RESOLUTION NO. 04-08

WHEREAS, The Higher Education Coordinating Board's *Guidelines for Program Planning, Approval, and Review* require new degree programs to undergo a three-stage review process; and

WHEREAS, The public four-year institutions have submitted their 2005-2007 institutional academic program plans for Board review and consideration in accordance with the *Guidelines*; and

WHEREAS, The enactment of Substitute House Bill 3103 extends the Board's program planning and approval roles and responsibilities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board defers taking action on the 2005-2007 institutional academic program plans until it has adopted updated program approval policies, processes, and practices in keeping with the provisions of HB 3103 as enacted April 1, 2004, by the Legislature and Governor.

Adopted:

May 20, 2004

Attest:

Bob Craves, Chair

Ann Ramsay-Jenkins, Secretary

